

Roland Houart* & Emily H. Vokes**

ON THE IDENTITY OF *ASPELLA ANCEPS* (LAMARCK, 1822)
(GASTROPODA: MURICIDAE)@

Abstract

The Mediterranean species usually identified as *Aspella anceps* (Lamarck, 1822) or *Aspella* sp. cf. *anceps* in recent literature, an identical species from the Pliocene of Italy, and a species of *Aspella* from the Pleistocene of Hurghada (Egypt) are compared with the holotype of *Ranella* *anceps* Lamarck, 1822, and are considered to be conspecific.

Riassunto

Le specie mediterranee attuali solitamente identificate come *Aspella anceps* (Lamarck, 1822) oppure *Aspella* sp. cfr. *anceps*, come anche un'identica specie del Pliocene italiano, nonché una specie di *Aspella* del Pleistocene di Hurghada (Egitto), confrontate con l'olotipo di *Ranella anceps* Lamarck, 1822 vengono considerate conspecifiche con quest'ultima.

Discussion

A Recent species of *Aspella* occurring from Libya to Turkey, in the Mediterranean Sea (Figs 3-4, 7-8), and a fossil species from the Pliocene of Italy have been identified as *Aspella anceps* (Lamarck, 1822), (BARASH & DANIN, 1972 and 1992; FRANCHINI, 1977; INZANI & BERTARELLI, 1985) or as *Aspella* sp. cf. *anceps* (SABELLI *et al.*, 1990; POPPE & GOTO, 1991). Another specimen of *Aspella* from the Pleistocene of Hurghada, Egypt, in the vicinity of the Red Sea, was received for identification (Figs 5-6). It is the only specimen discovered during two weeks of intensive collecting (B. Landau, in litt.) in that particular area where many Pleistocene species are still representative in the Recent fauna of the Red Sea (LORENZ, 1992).

After comparison of the Recent Mediterranean shell with a fossil specimen from Italy, with the specimen from Hurghada, and other known species of *Aspella* from the Indo-West Pacific, it is now almost certain that both the Mediterranean and the fossil shells are different from any other species, and conspecific with *A. anceps* (Lamarck, 1822).

BARASH & DANIN (1972: 312) cited *A. anceps* and an Indo-Pacific species that has migrated in the Mediterranean Sea through the Suez Canal, but it seems now obvious that this species has been in the Mediterranean since at least 1905, and in the fossil record since the Miocene (INZANI & BERTARELLI, 1985). All other records of *A. anceps* cited by BARASH & DANIN (1972 and 1992) from Indo-Pacific localities are obviously other species.

* Research Associate Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique. Rue Vautier, 29, 1040, Brussels

** Department of Geology, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, 70118, USA

@ Lavoro accettato il 12 gennaio 1995

The holotype of *Ranella anceps* (Figs 1-2), described from an unknown locality, is in the Geneva Museum, but is very worn: the protoconch is broken, and there is no trace anymore of the intritacalx [a particular chalky surface layer observed in some gastropods families (D'ATTILIO & RADWIN, 1971), most important and often decisive for specific identification, especially in some muricid genera like *Aspella* and *Dermomurex*], so that comparison with other species is difficult. However, as stated by VOKES (1992: 56), there are also some differences in the overall outline of the shell that may be of some help for a correct identification. On basis of these features only, the holotype of *A. anceps* is similar in shape to at least 4 species: *Aspella platylaevis* Radwin & D'Attilio, 1976, *A. ponderi* Radwin & D'Attilio, 1976, *A. media* Houart, 1987, and the undetermined Mediterranean and fossil species.

From all these species, it seems now that the Mediterranean and the fossil shells are the most similar. Although less slender, they attains approximately the same size (compare Figs 1-2 and 3-4), with an identical, ovate, slightly oblique aperture; the buttresses covering the suture are evenly broad, and the siphonal canal is short and relatively broad in all examined specimens. It is the only known species which remains «officially» unnamed until now, but which is regularly recorded as *A. anceps* or *A. sp. cf. anceps*.

Records (Recent specimens)

Libya: Tripoli; Egypt: Alexandria (HAAS, 1937); Israël: 'Atlit, 'Atlit to Dor, Bat Gallim, Caesarea, Haifa Bay, Mikhmoret, Quishon, Shiqmona (BARASH & DANIN, 1972 and 1992), Atlit-Dor (FRANCHINI, 1977), Haifa (coll. F. Swinnen), 'Atlit (coll. R. Houart); Turkey: Antalya (coll. F. Swinnen).

Description

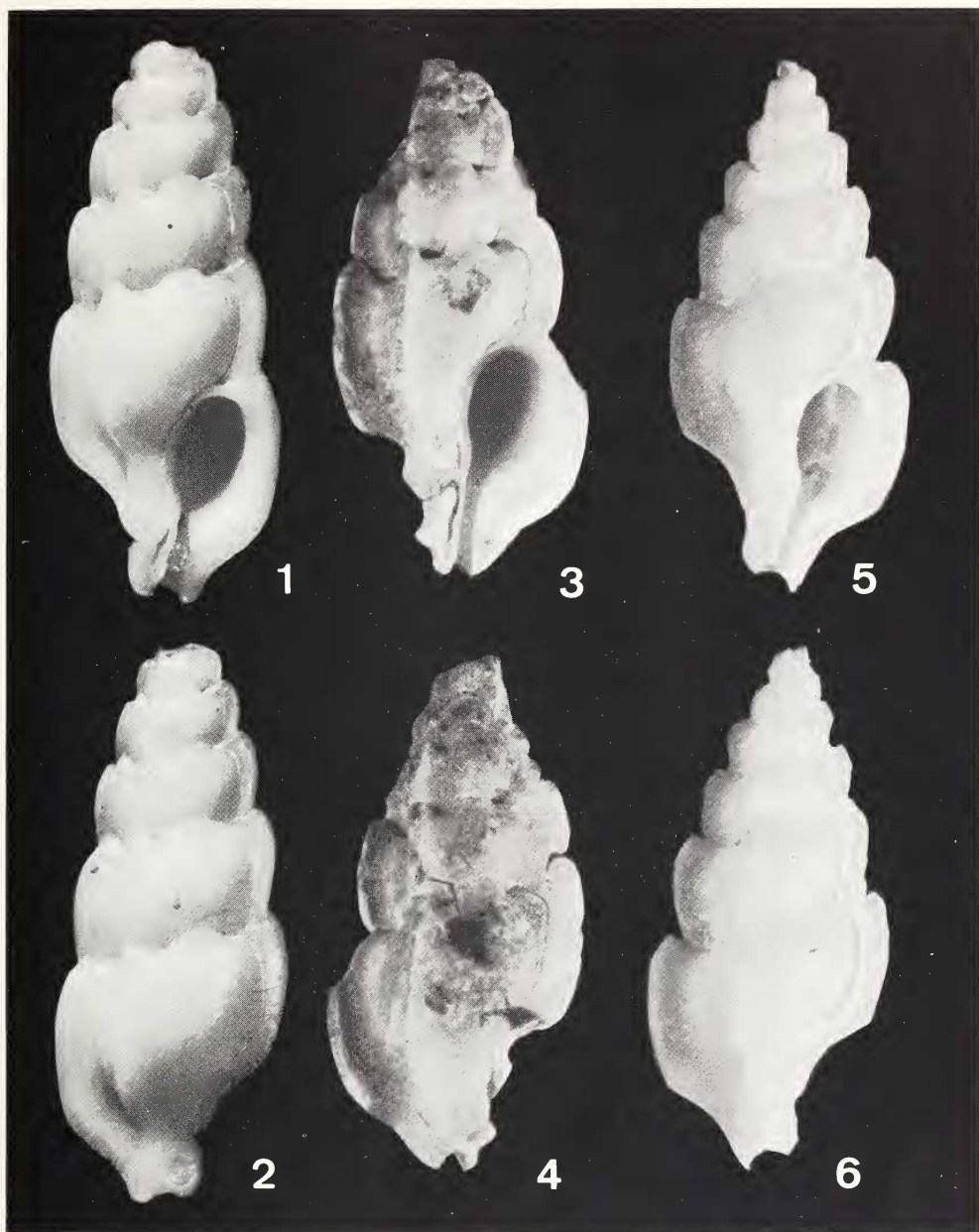
Shell small, up to 14+ mm in length at maturity (holotype), slender, lanceolate. Spire very high, with 1.25 protoconch whorls and up to 5+ flattened, weakly convex or weakly shouldered teleoconch whorls. Suture impressed, partially obscured by relatively broad buttress connecting to preceding whorl.

Protoconch large, globose; whorls rounded, smooth; terminal varix unknown (eroded).

Axial sculpture of teleoconch whorls consisting of high, strong, rounded varices and low intervarical ribs: first whorl with 6 ribs; from second to fourth whorl, one dorsal and one ventral rib becoming axial costae, reducing gradually in strength; next whorls with two lateral, more strongly developed varices, and one central and dorsal less developed varices. No spiral sculpture when the intritacalx is removed.

Aperture small, narrow, ovate. Columellar lip smooth, rim completely adherent, no anal notch. Outer lip smooth, occasionally with weak, low denticles within. Siphonal canal short, broad, open.

Shell white, covered by a light tan, axially striate intritacalx (Fig. 8), aperture white. Operculum and radula unknown.



1-8. *Aspella anceps* (Lamarck, 1822)

1-2. Holotype MHNG 1098.89, 14 mm, photo J. Dajoz.

3-4. Antalya, Turkey, 10.7 mm (coll. F. Swinnen).

5-6. Hurghada, Egypt, 11 mm (coll. B. Landau).



7



8

7. Protoconch (scale 0.5 mm), Haifa, Israël (coll. F. Swinnen).

8. Detail of the intritacalx (X32), Antalya, Turkey (coll. F. Swinnen).

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to B. Landau (Portugal) and to F. Swinnen (Belgium) for the loan of material, and to Dr. C. Vaucher (Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Genève) for providing photographs of the holotype.

LITERATURE CITED

- BARASH A.L. & Z. DANIN, 1972. The Indo-Pacific species of Mollusca in the Mediterranean and notes on a collection from the Suez Canal. *Israël Journal of Zoology*, **21**: 301-374.
- BARASH A.L. & Z. DANIN, 1992. Annotated list of Mediterranean molluscs of Israel and Sinari. *Sauna Palaestina - Mollusca I*. Jerusalem: 1-405.
- D'ATTILIO A. & G.E. RADWIN, 1971. *The intritacalx*, an undescribed shell layer in mollusk. *The Veliger* **13**(4): 344-347.
- FRANCHINI D.A., 1977. I generi *Aspella* Mörch, 1877 e *Dermomurex* Monterosato, 1890 nel Mar Mediterraneo, *Conchiglie* **13**(3-4): 71-80.
- INZANI A. & C. BERTARELLI, 1985. La famiglia Muricidae nel Pliocene Italiano. *Hobby Fauna International News* **I** (11), part. 1: 24-31; **I** (12), part. 2: 27-35.
- LORENZ F., 1992. Pleistocene Cypraea from the vicinity of Hurghada, Egypt. *Schriften zur Malakozoologie* **5**: 19-41.
- POPPE G.T. & Y. GOTO, 1991. European Seashells, Vol. 1 (Polyplacophora, Caudofoveata, Solenogastrea, Gastropoda), Hemmen, Wiesbaden: 1-352.
- SABELLI B., R. GIANNUZZI-SAVELLI & D. BEDULLI, 1990-1992. Catalogo Annotato dei molluschi marini del Mediterraneo. Libreria Naturalistica Bolognese, I: i-xiv, 1-348 (1990); II: 349-498 (1992); III: 501-781 (1992).
- TILLIER L. & M. BAVAY, 1905. Les mollusques testacés du Canal de Suez. *Bulletin de la Société Zoologique, France*, **30**: 170-181.
- VOKES E.H., 1992. Cenozoic Muricidae of the western Atlantic region. Part IX - *Pterynotus*, *Poirieria*, *Aspella*, *Dermomurex*, *Calotropion*, *Acantholabia*, and *Attilosia*; additions and corrections. *Tulane Studies in Geology and Palontology*, **25** (1-3): 1-108.